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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001104

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2018
TAGS: [ETTC](#) [PREL](#) [EFIN](#) [KTFN](#) [PTER](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#) [CD](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN/CHAD: FRANCE STILL OPPOSED TO USG APPROACH
ON SANCTIONS

REF: A. STATE 61842
[1](#)B. PARIS 1079 (EXDIS NOTAL)
[1](#)C. PARIS 1038 (NOTAL)
[1](#)D. PARIS 1036 (NOTAL)
[1](#)E. PARIS 1023 (NOTAL)
[1](#)F. PARIS 964 (NOTAL)
[1](#)G. BEIJING 2201 (NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, 1.4 (b/d
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[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: French Presidential AF-advisor Romain Serman on June 9, 10, and 11 reiterated France's opposition to the USG position on sanctioning four individuals in connection with Sudan and Chad, particularly with respect to Daoussa Deby Itno, indicating that sanctioning Daoussa was a virtual "red line" issue for France. While stressing that he had no liking for Daoussa, Serman said that there was no convincing evidence that he was involved in the recent JEM attacks on Sudan, that he was being isolated by Chad President Deby, with a consequent loss in influence, and that it was not appropriate to place sanctions on him now whereas it might have been several years ago. Serman gave no indication that France would yield on this point without further consultation with the USG, and Washington may wish to contact Serman's superior, Bruno Joubert, as the USG has done in the past when U.S.-France differences have arisen. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The Sudan/Chad sanctions issue featured prominently in AF/C Director Karl Wycoff's June 9 meetings with French MFA and Presidency officials (other aspects of which are reported separately). MFA DAS-equivalent Christine Fages in her meeting with Wycoff skirted the issue and referred only to her understanding that the U.S. and France had different views, which was perhaps understandable given the disagreements between the MFA and Presidency (see refs B-F for background). Serman, however, engaged in a full-blown discussion of the issue, repeating the same arguments as reported in refs B, E, and F, and he elaborated in June 10 and 11 follow-up conversations after we had provided him with ref A points.

[1](#)3. (C) In both his June 9 meeting with AF/C Wycoff and June 10 and 11 conversations with acting AF-watcher, Serman repeated his view that the U.S. formula on sanctions was not coherent. First, he repeated the need to promote dialogue between the N'Djamena and Khartoum regimes and their respective rebel opponents, so as to increase the possibility of their arriving at political settlements that might lead to

reconciliation between the governments and the rebels in both countries. To achieve that, he advised that the threat of sanctions be used as a means of encouraging further government-rebel dialogue in Chad. The absence of such a threat in the U.S. plan against Chadian rebels such as the Nouri and Erdimi factions in his view was a shortcoming because it could weaken Deby's willingness to engage with them. Serman on June 10 and 11 further clarified that France was not now seeking sanctions against the rebels but instead wanted the threat of sanctions to push the rebels into talking to N'Djamena. Sanctions could then be considered if they did not engage in such talks or, once engaged, did not follow through on commitments. Stressing that he did not like JEM or Khalil Ibrahim either, he said that to place sanctions on them without also encouraging JEM-Khartoum dialogue was a mistake as well. He noted that France wanted to sanction others helping JEM, such as Gibril Ibrahim and Ali al Hajj Mohamed, which showed that France was not trying to protect JEM. However, France was also trying to promote JEM-Khartoum dialogue and wanted to use sanctions against JEM associates to encourage such dialogue, and not simply to punish JEM, which seemed to be the U.S. objective.

¶4. (C) Serman was most insistent regarding Daoussa Deby Itno. He agreed that Daoussa was an unsavory character who had played a negative role for years. However, he said that Daoussa's influence was decreasing, in part because the French had been advising President Deby to deprive his half-brother of influence, which President Deby was doing. Serman said that there was no evidence that Daoussa had been involved in the May JEM offensive that reached Omdurman. His

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lack of involvement, Serman believed, resulted from President Deby's efforts to isolate Daoussa. Serman noted that the September 2007 report of the UNSC Sudan Sanctions Committee was based on Daoussa's behavior during the August 2006-September 2007 period; Daoussa's role and influence had since declined and it was no longer appropriate, Serman said, to base sanctions on what had happened then in contrast to Daoussa's reduced current role. Serman indicated that France would continue its firm opposition to including Daoussa in the sanctions list.

¶5. (C) Serman noted that President Deby seemed to be trying to distance himself from JEM, which he could not completely control in any case. Serman said that during the February rebel offensive, JEM had re-entered Chad from Sudan. However, Deby did not have JEM come to his rescue in N'Djamena (which was a risk, according to Serman, because of the rebels' near victory). Instead, he had JEM remain to the east, where it shadowed some of the rebel elements as they retreated from N'Djamena.

¶6. (C) Serman said that sanctions against Daoussa might have been appropriate several years ago, when he was more directly involved in destabilizing activities. Serman thought it unwise to impose sanctions on him now, when his involvement had decreased. This would send the wrong signal. Of greater concern was the possibility that sanctioning Daoussa would make President Deby think that Chad was being unfairly singled out for punishment, especially if there were no pressure applied to the Chadian rebels. This could negatively affect N'Djamena's views on the value of the budding dialogue between the government and the rebels and discourage the Deby regime from participating.

¶7. (C) Stressing a point he has made several times previously, and stating that he wanted to repeat this point, Serman said that if the U.S. plan were put into effect, the result would be the following: No sanctions against the Chadian rebels, sanctions against Daoussa, sanctions against JEM figures (without encouragement for a political dialogue with Khartoum), and, because of Chinese unwillingness, no sanctions against Sudanese officials. This would mean that all of Khartoum's enemies would face sanctions, but with

neither its own officials nor its proxies in Chad being sanctioned or facing the threat of imminent sanctions. Serman said this did not make sense to him and would prove to be counterproductive.

18. (C) COMMENT: Given our discussions over the past couple of weeks and the recent interagency friction between the Presidency and MFA, it is clear that Serman is the dominant GOF figure when it comes to making day-to-day Sudan/Chad policy. He has maintained his position consistently on the sanctions issue, despite our repeated attempts to sway him, and does not seem inclined to yield. He has indicated that he enjoys the confidence of his superiors, including Sarkozy, with whom he appears to have regular contact. AF A/S Frazer may want to consider contacting Serman's superior, Deputy Diplomatic Advisor Bruno Joubert, in an effort to resolve this matter. END COMMENT.

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